

## Houston Planning Commission

### Urban Subcommittee Meeting Wednesday, April 13, 2005 Summary

#### Attendance:

Algenita Davis	Anne Olson	
Barbara Tennant	Carla Wyatt	Ed Gonzales
Catherine Burst	James L. (Jim) Wallace	Mary Lou Henry
Paul Charles	Rey De la Reza	Ron Lindsey
Thomas M. Colbert	Guy Hagstette	Emile Browne

#### Handouts:

Issue Paper; PC Briefing on Transit Corridors Planning, Planning Standards (from Chapter 42); and 1996 Chapter 42 Issue Paper

**Objectives:** Produce an outline or policy paper of urban guidelines/objectives reflecting the consensus of committee members. Present paper to Planning Commission and public for discussion and approval. Upon approval, document will be presented and debated at City Council to be drawn up and enacted upon as new city ordinance.

#### Discussion:

*Introduction:* Reviewed goals of Urban Committee (UC) and previous (1996) Chapter 42 Issue Paper.

*Reviewed City of Houston (COH) urban rules/regulations* and recent development trends including the nature of variance requests proposing new development models.

- What is a viable product for urban areas such as urban CVS corner stores?
- UC should consider allowing diagonal parking on major thoroughfares (MTF) to count towards commercial parking requirements.
- Is it possible to deviate from standard 25' building lines along MTFs?
- Can we adjust Chapter 42 to allow for more creative development in urban areas?

*Topic 1:* Scope of this project...

- NOT zoning or building design
- IS public space and pedestrian access (in addition to cars, not replacing them)
- Create flexibility without losing predictability
- Facilitate development while preserving neighborhoods

Questions:

- For Public Works and Engineering Department (PWE)...How to design streets better? How wide should sidewalks be? How do street lights factor in? How do we design for trees on the 'front end'?

*Topic 2:* Concentrate on urban transit corridor planning along proposed light rail lines to extend as layers for commercial/residential growth to urban neighborhoods.

- Incentives – monetary or other means such as coordinating proposed development with Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).
- Projected routes of METRO lines: focus on urban connections.
- Preservation of neighborhood context on the fringes of corridors in the form of performance standards

Questions:

- Can UC think outside Main Street rail line corridors?
- It is possible to focus on other urban design items other than transit corridor planning?
- What are mixed-use/commercial uses that will prevail along transit corridors?

*Topic 3:* Newly defined urban street types might offer potential for varied characteristics from standard PWE definitions of public Right of Way (ROW's).

- Sidewalk sizes
- Landscape ordinances
- Pedestrian vs. Auto vs. Light Rail: views from street level.

Questions

- Can UC frame regulations around defined street types?
- Will this entice development to build along transit corridors?

**Next Steps:** Planning Department will distribute proposed Performance Standards and issues for discussion items for Transit Corridor Plan the next meeting